

ABSTRACT

Crushable gel beads 10 formed of an agar complex provide novel cosmetic, pharmaceutical, etc. delivery vehicles for topical delivery of biologically or cosmetically active agents. Preferred agar beads 10 are complexes of a continuous phase of agar gel 12 in a self-supporting solid or semi-solid form with a restraining polymer 14. Entrapped in and dispersed randomly throughout each agar bead 10 is a water-soluble, preferably polar, restraining polymer 14, preferably a quaternized cationic polymer, such as polyquaternium 24 or steardimonium hydroxyethylcellulose. Various active agents 16 may be bound to restraining polymer 14, for example ascorbic acid, lactic acid or papain. Methods of manufacture are also described.